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A FEW PARALLELS FROM THE CLASSICS

SHAKESPERE AND SENECA

That Shakespere was acquainted with Seneca is a priori probable and approaches nearer to proof with every new parallel or coincidence noted. "And earthly power doth then show likest God's," etc., has been recently discovered in *De clementia*, iii-v. Hardly less plausible is the parallel which I have observed between the speech of Constance in *King John*, Act III, scene iv, and a passage of the *Consolatio ad Marciam*, 1, 5. Constance says:

Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,
.
Then, have I reason to be fond of grief.

With a precisely similar conceit Seneca writes: *teneas licet et amplexeris dolorem tuum, quem tibi in filii locum superstitem fecisti*. Similarly Lucan, *Pharsalia*, ix, 112, *et amat pro conjuge luctum*. Shakespere has merely expanded the fancy with Elizabethan exuberance.

MILTON AND CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

Milton's "bright countenance of Truth" (*The Reason of Church Government*) has become a familiar quotation. It is a translation of ἀληθείας δὲ ὑμῶν τὸ πρόσωπον τὸ φαίδρὸν in the second paragraph of the *Protrepticus* of Clement of Alexandria.

DANIEL AND SENECA

Daniel's well-worn,

unless above himself he can
Erect himself, how poor a thing is man,

seems to be a translation of *O quam res est contempta homo, nisi supra humana surrexerit*, in the *Prologus* to Seneca's "Natural Questions." The lines quoted by Lowell ("Democracy") from "Musophilus,"

That few is all the world, which *with a few*
Doth ever *live* and move and work and strive,

are obviously suggested by Lucan's "*Humanum paucis vivit genus*" (*Pharsalia*, v, 343).

Lucan is out of favor now, but has been much read in the past. For example, the lines in Jonson's *Sejanus*, II, 2,

As if there were that chaos bred in things,
That laws and liberty would not rather choose
To be quite broken and ta'en hence by us
Than have the stain to be preserved by such,

are obviously a paraphrase of

non usque adeo permiscuit imis
Longus summa dies, ut non si voce Metelli
Serventur leges, malint a Caesare tolli.

Symonds selects for special praise in the "Misfortunes of Arthur" the vigorous lines:

Yea though I conqueror die and full of fame,
Yet let my death and parture rest obscure.
No grave I need, O fates, nor burial rites,
Nor stately hearse, nor tomb with haughty top;
But let my carcase lurk; yea let my death
Be aye unknown so that in every coast
I still be feared and looked for every hour.

He fails to observe that they are a translation of Lucan, *Pharsalia*, v, 668 ff.

mihi funere nullo
est opus, o superi: lacerum retinete cadaver
Fluctibus in mediis: desint mihi busta rogosque,
Dum metuar semper, terraque exspecter ab omni.

These are but a few casual illustrations of how what we disparagingly dub "Silver Latinity" has been unsuspectingly accepted as golden English.

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